

Tami Simon Interview Eckhart Tolle on ExperienceOfAwakening--

[Speaker 2] (0:06 - 1:25)

Eckhart, you've now had the chance at Eckhart Tolle TV to answer over a hundred questions from different members of the Eckhart Tolle TV community, and we still have more questions. But what I'm really curious about today is to hear about you, your experience. Most of the questions have been about our community members and their process of awakening.

But in your case, awakening wasn't really a process. It was a sudden and complete overhaul, if you will, rewiring, restructuring of your being. And as important as this event was, a rare event, actually, in human life, you've written about it in just a few paragraphs in *The Power of Now*.

But I've never heard you tell the story of your awakening. And that's where I'd like to start, if you will, in as much detail as possible.

[Speaker 1] (1:28 - 15:25)

Well, the background to it is several years of inner states of anxiety and depression in my 20s. And even at university, I got to university late because I didn't have any qualifications. Initially, I left school at 14.

So later in England, I got the qualifications to get into university. I was already in my early 20s, and I had a full-time job at the same time. And at that time, gradually, the depressions and a lot of states of high anxiety also started.

I did very well at university in my degree course, and I worked very hard. I wasn't aware of that so much at the time. But later on, years later, I met somebody who was a student at the same time in a different faculty, but he observed me, and he said, oh, you were always working.

You were working until midnight in the library, and I couldn't believe it. And then I realized, oh, yeah, I must have been working very hard. But the motivation was fear, anxiety of not doing well.

So it wasn't enjoyable. I was motivated by anxiety. And that came to a head after I graduated.

I did very well. I was happy for two or three weeks. And then the anxiety and depression came back, even worse than before.

So that night came, I was living in a little bedsitter, as they call it in England, in London. I

had finished my university course and didn't know what to do next. And that night, I woke up again in the night with a very active mind.

But at that moment, of course, I was my mind. I didn't know that there was an active mind, because I was the thought processes that kept me awake and were telling me how many reasons I had to be in a state of fear, the uncertainty of future, what am I going to live on, am I going to make it, and so on. Unhappiness with who I was as a person, inadequacy, and so on.

And so there was this incessant mind activity that during that night again, creating enormous amount of anxiety to the point of breathlessness. And feeling completely cut off from the outside world, meaning alien. It seemed alien when I remember looking at objects in the room, they seemed completely alien to me.

It's only later, years later, I read a novel, I don't remember much of it, but a similar feeling was described there, and I recognized it. It was by Jean-Paul Sartre, and the novel was called *La Nausea*, existential anguish, and so that was how I experienced it. So intense unhappiness and fear, and then the thought came as I was lying in bed that the burden of living was too much, I didn't want to do it anymore, I can't, and so the thought arose, I can't live with myself any longer.

That thought repeated itself a few times, and then a moment came when I became aware of that thought as a thought, and the thought then said, is that I can't live with myself, what does that mean? There must be two of myself here, because if I can't live with myself, who am I and who is the self? There was a sudden, I was looking at that statement that my mind had created, I can't live with myself, and I saw the strangeness of it.

I had separated myself in two, and so I saw who am I and who is the self, and that question, that was the last thought, the last significant thought before the awakening experience, this last significant thought posed a question, and that question was, who am I and who is that self that I can't live with, is there one or two here, am I one or two? That was the last thought, and the answer to that question did not come as a thought, the answer to that question, I didn't know at the time, by the way, that this is what was happening, but I can explain it now, I couldn't have explained it then, the answer to that question came not as a thought, but as an inner stepping back from thought, an inner disidentification from thought, and so I suddenly realized, but not through analytical thinking, that that self that I couldn't live with had no actual reality, that was the unhappy self, so its illusory nature was recognized, but not through thinking, not through thinking this, the self is really illusory, no, the illusory nature was recognized as an indirect recognition beyond thought, I could see that it is nothing, but without saying that mentally, so am I one or two, the last question led to a disidentification from the me, the unhappy me, the whole sense of self that was burdened with unhappiness and fear

and anxiety and inadequacy and so on, so that self kind of dissolved, because I must have withdrawn completely my identification with it, so I stepped out of the mind-created self, and what remained was myself as consciousness, but not as the unhappy me, and so the unhappy me began to get shaky and then something happened to it, it must have, in its final stages, I think there was again, I felt almost disappearing into some black hole, because it was a kind of death experience, it was the death of the unhappy me, and so the perception of that, it wasn't so much visual as more like a feeling that I was disappearing into some hole, and there was still some fear left there, anxiety of what's happening to me, and then, but I heard a voice, again not as an audible voice, but more as a realization, don't resist, or resist nothing, I think it said, and so I just let go, and then a kind of void opened, but not a visual one, and I don't remember much else, I must have gone to sleep soon after that, so there was the, am I one or two, was the question that arose, I can't live with myself, that question brought about an inner separation between the mind-created self and the consciousness that had identified with it, that was fueling it, so the consciousness that had created this dream-like figure or self stepped out of it, and so I realized, yes, I was two, the self and I, but only one was real, and so the consciousness that I am was real, and the unreal was no longer being sustained, by my identification with it, I'm explaining it now, but I couldn't have explained it then, it just happened, it took several years, I don't know how many, maybe at least seven or eight years before I could have explained it in the way in which I'm explaining it now, and the next morning I awoke, at first I didn't even remember that what happened in the night, so my eyes opened and the first impression was of everything being fresh and new around me, it was the old familiar room, everything felt alive, everything was amazing, and even simple objects, their very presence was lovely to look at, the light coming through the curtains, I knew it was alive, and most important of all, a deep sense of peace inside, so I was looking at everything through the peace, and I thought, wow, it's wonderful, and I picked some things up and looked as if I'd been born into this world for the first time, and of course I can give an additional explanation now, which I couldn't have done then, I wasn't bringing the past into my sense perceptions, there was just the sense perception, without the labeling of the sense perception, there was just a peaceful background to it, and I wasn't calling it anything, it wasn't the old familiar objects in the room, because the old familiar self wasn't there anymore, there was only consciousness there, a field of consciousness, and that day I took a bus and went into downtown central London, and the same, in the middle of the traffic, watching the people, and then getting off the bus, walking around the city, this incredible sense of peace, and I thought, well, this is amazing, today I feel so peaceful, but then the next day it was there still again, the peace.

Then I actually got a notebook, and I wrote down, something important has happened to me, but I don't know what it is, but I'm just going to write down these things, because I might lose it again and forget about it, forget what happened. I haven't, by the way, haven't looked at that notebook in a long, long, long time, so I don't know exactly what I

wrote there.

[Speaker 2] (15:26 - 15:27)

But you still have it?

[Speaker 1] (15:27 - 15:27)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (15:28 - 15:28)

That might be curious.

[Speaker 1] (15:29 - 15:30)

I'll have a look one of these days.

[Speaker 2] (15:31 - 16:21)

Now one thing, you were lying down during the entire experience, so when this separation, yes, yes, in bed, yes, and it was dark, yes, yeah. Now sometimes people say that you can't describe awakening as a quote-unquote experience, and I notice even as you recount this, there are aspects where it's hard to find the words, because it wasn't being processed through that part of your mind. So if it's not exactly an experience, what's happening outside of, I mean, you can't quite give a visual for it, you can't quite say that you felt this or that, that's very curious to me.

[Speaker 1] (16:23 - 18:59)

It's not an experience as such, because an experience is something that is added to you, one could say. When you experience something, it's something new that is added to your life. You might call it a life experience, but this is definitely not a life experience, and it is the opposite of something being added to you.

So in that sense, it's the opposite of an experience, because instead of something being added to you, something is being removed from you. So something that before was heavy and looked substantial is being, something dissolves rather than something being added, and it leaves behind something that, again, is not entirely new, but had been obscured before. So it's not an adding onto, and that perhaps is even for spiritual seekers, an important thing to consider, because many people are looking for some spiritual experience as if it were something that can be added to them, and that's not how it is.

In that sense, one could say it's a negative experience. So, or you could say it's a loss rather than a gain, but it's a beautiful loss. But in the transitional moment of loss, it can

still be painful, because it is a kind of death.

So you lose something, but what you gain is not something that comes, that just, it emerges, had been there before always, your essential reality, but it's not added on. Hard to explain, I can only point. So the important thing is not to look for an experience that, not to look for an adding onto me, because everything else is like that.

One wants to have more of more experiences, and that's the big minus experience, not a plus experience.

[Speaker 2] (19:03 - 19:51)

For many people in the process of awakening, integrating their physical form with vast, infinite states of being creates certain interesting experiences, challenges. Sometimes people who touch big states of openness will then find their body shaking, or that there's a sense of, wow, this is so much energy, and this physical form isn't used to that much energy running through the nervous system. And here, your experience, or your minus experience, so complete, seemingly, such a huge restructuring, what was that like for you physically?

[Speaker 1] (19:52 - 21:37)

I don't remember anything, any kind of painful physical experience accompanying it. There was, part of the sense of peace was a much heightened sense of aliveness in the inner energy field of the body. So I felt my entire being felt more alive.

I hardly knew that, because that was part of the total experience afterwards of, not experience, because it was lasting, of that vibrantly alive sense of inner peace that was there all the time. And part of that vibrantly alive sense of inner peace was the aliveness that I could feel throughout the entire body. But that was very pleasant.

It wasn't an unpleasant thing. So why it is that some people seem to experience even painful things as the energy increases, it could be that the pain or the pressure is felt where there are still blockages in the body. And it could be that with that, what happened, the surrender that night, if you call it that, may well have dissolved also all those blockages that would have been there otherwise.

But that's, I'm guessing, I don't know the ultimate answer of why I didn't experience that.

[Speaker 2] (21:38 - 21:42)

Were you even aware of an inner body, quote unquote, before?

[Speaker 1] (21:42 - 21:57)

No. No, I was completely in the head. So there was no, I didn't feel alive, except the

turmoil in the head felt a bit alive, but not a pleasant aliveness.

[Speaker 2] (21:57 - 22:05)

So what did that feeling inside your body feel like? I wonder if you can describe it for me in even greater detail.

[Speaker 1] (22:06 - 23:20)

Well, as you know, later, that became part of, many years later, became part of the teaching where I'm, as you, pointing out to people that they can actually, what happened to me accidentally, that one aspect of what has happened, they can actually consciously direct their attention away from where it normally dwells in the movement of thought and direct attention. So when you're asking me what it felt like or feels like, and my answer is to direct you or whoever is listening to this, direct them to the actual, you can actually go there right now in yourself and relive what happened there to me accidentally by consciously choosing to direct attention into the inner energy field of the body. Usually I tell people, start with one part of the body, put attention into your hands.

And as we speak.

[Speaker 2] (23:20 - 23:26)

Yeah. If you can describe the feelings to me, that's what I'm curious about for you, even right now, right here.

[Speaker 1] (23:26 - 27:42)

A tingling would be going too far, although for some people, some people describe it as tingling, but it's on the way towards tingling inside. A, if I could make a sound, it doesn't have a sound, but if it were a sound, it would go, it's a, it's the, it's a, it almost feels like a vibration. It's not quite a vibration, but it almost feels like a vibration.

So very hard to put into words because language is designed to reflect objects ultimately, whether physical objects or mental objects, but language can't really find adequate words to talk about that, which has no object to it as such. So all I can say is approximate. It's a bit like tingling.

It's a little bit like a vibration. It could even be as a warmth. Sometimes actually the temperature in the body sometimes increases for people as they become more aware of what I call now the inner body.

And once you can sense the energy inside your hands as that, the tingling or vibrating aliveness, very subtle, perhaps only, that's fine, then it becomes easier to be aware that it's in other parts of the body too. And so you, it's a very pleasant way of becoming rooted more deeply within the being that you are. And also it's a very effective way of

becoming anchored in the present moment, whereas the mind is never really in the present moment.

It's always elsewhere. So you take attention away from thought into that, and then you rest in that, and you can still speak and listen, and you can even think, but you want, you're not going to do more thinking when you fence the inner body. You're not going to do more thinking than you actually need to do it at that moment.

And it may well be that you don't need to do any thinking that moment. Maybe it's just, so that's, the inner body is part of what I now call presence, the state of presence. So you are, you are present with your whole body.

So that kind of happened to me accidentally, and you could say, as I began to understand after years what had happened to me accidentally, and as I began to work with people who came to me to ask questions, and then I began speaking to them, answers came, then that which happened to me accidentally, I became part of the teaching, and I realized this is something that you don't have to actually wait for, for you to happen to you accidentally, neither the inner body awareness nor the surrender to whatever is, and the disidentification from thinking, all these things you can actually do. You can, so I'm showing people a way, but a lot of the teaching comes out of that spontaneous occurrence that happened to me, so to speak, and so what happened that night, and gradually as I began to understand it, and help people with their problems, it gradually over the years became more differentiated, and became a spiritual teaching, and that took years and years, and it was an organic process.

The foundation is, didn't change.

[Speaker 2] (27:43 - 28:01)

Now just to clarify one thing, are you saying that in a state of presence, when someone is present, that the inner body will always be there in some wakeful, slightly tingly, or something like that way, that there's always that physical correlate?

[Speaker 1] (28:01 - 28:15)

An aliveness there, an entire, the presence is an entire body state. It almost seems that in presence, even things around you are more present.

[Speaker 4] (28:15 - 28:15)

Mm-hmm.

[Speaker 1] (28:16 - 28:53)

So it really affects everything that your body, and the moment you look at things in presence, you realize they are alive, so it's not only you, you become more alive, it

seems that the world around you becomes more alive, or rather you, it may not, it is not more alive, but you recognize for the first time it's aliveness, and you share, you share the aliveness with the flower, you recognize your own aliveness in the, aliveness is one word I'm using, I could use other words.

[Speaker 2] (29:00 - 29:23)

When you started making sense, if we can say that, of your experience, having a framework for it, did the question ever occur to you, why me? This kind of sudden, very thorough awakening happens to so few people in any generation, did you have the thought, why me, why does this happen to me?

[Speaker 1] (29:23 - 31:25)

Never, I never had that thought, and I believe the reason for this is that I'd never perceived it as something that happened to me, really, when I talk about it because we're using language, it sounds as if it was something that happened to me, but that's, language works like that, otherwise I wouldn't be able to use language at all, but if I look deeper, I'll have to say, I never had the feeling that that was something that happened to me, and that is because the essence of that is the disappearance of the me, the me becoming, so we, the me, the sense of personal or separate identity as, that's me, me, that sense of the form identity as the me became so weakened in that, that something was shining through then, where the me was, there was only a transparency, there was still a form, of course, some, to some extent, but no identification with it, and without the identification with the form, it became, the form became semi-transparent, and the entire thing that happened, if we can even call it happened, was that as the me became transparent, the consciousness came through very strongly, and it is not, it's not the me, it's the consciousness, which is formless, and it has nothing to do with the person, so it only happened because the me almost disappeared, that it could happen, and for this reason, it never occurred to me to ask, why did it happen to me? I don't know if you, does that make sense?

[Speaker 2] (31:25 - 31:59)

Yeah, it does make sense, I guess the question though still remains for me, this body-mind form was somehow selected by the cosmos to undergo this minus experience for, I would say, in my words, the benefit of other people, how come it was chosen, that particular body-mind, like maybe that question didn't occur to you, but here I'm asking it now, if you were answering, just looking at this from the outside, what would you say?

[Speaker 1] (32:00 - 32:40)

I don't know if it was chosen, it would of course happen to any me that recognizes its own essential nothingness, any me anywhere in the world that recognizes that

essentially its sense of identity was to a large extent illusory, and then it's, the realization is there, why did the realization come to this particular illusory identity, I don't know, I never actually asked myself that question, it's a mystery.

[Speaker 2] (32:42 - 33:42)

Even though you might not have asked yourself that question in the past, here in this moment, if you take a look at it, do you have any ideas about why perhaps this, I mean, Eckhart, there's plenty of people who understand everything you said about the panic, the anxiety, there's a sense that there's a little me, there's an awareness that there's two of me here, but that's where the story ends for them, then maybe they pray to have the kind of awakening you had, lying on the ground, face down, praying, crying, whatever, and nothing happens, they wake up the same miserable wretch the next morning, and perhaps keep reading books, become a member of Eckhart Tolle TV, or who knows what, and so there's something clearly unique in your particular story, in anyone's story, but rare in your story, so it's, it for you, it just goes into the mystery.

[Speaker 1] (33:43 - 33:44)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (33:44 - 33:44)

Column.

[Speaker 1] (33:45 - 36:34)

Perhaps the form was ready through previous lifetimes, one way or another, I've never investigated past lifetimes, because I lost interest in past, but it may well be that the form was prepared for that, and that's the reason why it happened, but that would, I would be reluctant to say that that is actually the case, because that would mean the only way you can really awaken is if you've had enough incarnations, and so on.

I might, the teaching is really pointing out that virtually anybody can awaken, and not like as drastically as happened here, but almost anybody can at least enter the awakening process. There's a term in Buddhism which is, I think it's called a stream enterer, so anybody can enter the awakening process. Yes, some degree of readiness is required, but anybody who reads a book like The Power of Now or New Earth or any other spiritually powerful book that came, was written from a deep place of realization, anybody who reads that and is open to it and recognizes the essential truth in it, anybody who's drawn to a spiritual teaching and goes, there is an openness there, although there are still millions of people who don't, they wouldn't touch a spiritual book, and if they opened it, it would be totally meaningless. So I'm not talking of all those people, they obviously have to wait a little longer, but others who are, in whom there is an openness, then the awakening process can begin, they can enter the awakening

process, and that's all that's needed.

And I don't see, I just cannot see myself as a chosen one, it's something inside me that says no to that, but I may be wrong.

[Speaker 2] (36:37 - 37:40)

So I had the opportunity to interview you once before, Eckhart, about 10 years ago, and one of the things you reported to me then was that after this awakening, you experienced an 80% reduction in mental activity. And I'm curious in your life what it's like for you in terms of your relationship to thoughts, meaning do you sometimes have hours go by where there literally are no thoughts, or are there thoughts coming but they just float by and there's no attention is given to them? So what's it actually like?

And I'm sure it's different, obviously, if you're in the middle of an airport doing something than if you're just relaxing at home, but I'm curious to know more about the interior of your experience.

[Speaker 1] (37:40 - 43:41)

Yes. Well, there are long stretches of no thought, and I can still function in that state. For example, you talk about airport, I can perfectly check in or walk to the, go through security check, and then on to whatever, the lounge, without any thought, and this would not be uncommon that I would do something or go from where I get into the car and drive to the store to buy something.

And again, virtually no thought is not uncommon. So, and it does make occasionally little fragments may come up like little puffs of clouds, and then they're gone. So it's, there can be, or let's say I'm sitting at home not doing much, and occasional thoughts can drift in and out of awareness like clouds, like the sky is blue, but little puffy clouds come from time to time and they go.

The thoughts have no, I don't follow them and they don't even try anymore to get my attention, as is the case with people who are still very strongly identified with thought. Every thought pulls you, every thought pulls you where it wants you to go, and thoughts don't really have that pull anymore. They just, when they appear, there's a blue sky and the clouds appear and disappear, appear and disappear.

And there could even occasionally be a stream of thoughts in certain situations, or maybe not even connected to anything happening outside of me. There can be times when there are certain streams of thoughts, but again, they are harmless. They are not the thoughts that have this gravitational pull that just, and you have to follow them with your entire attention.

But it's a thought that, yes, from time to time, there may even be more clouds than blue

sky, but these clouds are no longer the heavy weather clouds that I had in the distant past and that other people perhaps recognize in their own lives. They are more like innocent little puffy clouds with thoughts, but no thought matters that much. And then it disappears.

It's not amplified by following it up and identifying with it and then becomes a heavy thing that takes possession of you. So it never feels as if any thought were taking possession of me. So yes, then to summarize, I think if anybody entered my inner state, they would be surprised how little thinking there actually is compared to probably what is still, for most people, normal, almost continuous.

How relatively little there is. Yes, there is some, and that which there is, doesn't have the heaviness anymore that it has when you're identified with the thoughts and they have a gravitational pull and they develop into streams and proliferate and develop into streams and you lose yourself completely in it. So that doesn't happen.

So I'm most, the not thinking is almost, would say predominates, unless there's something specific to think about. But then occasionally, yes, clouds come and go and so on, but there's always an awareness of the sky also. And it doesn't really matter whether I'm out in nature, walking in the forest, looking around.

Let's just describe, let's just describe perhaps one minute of me walking in the forest, walking, looking, the dog, trees, no thought, just looking at the trees, the plants, the aliveness of it, sensing the energy field. And then a thought may come and says, oh, when I get home, I need to, I need to do this or that. I forgot to do that.

I need to, when I get home, I still need to do that. Or I need to buy some, I need to buy some bananas later. Okay.

And then it's gone. And then some other thought comes of something, maybe could be anything, a person that tried to contact me the other day, didn't, and then it's gone again and back. So puffs come, go, go.

Predominantly, really awareness. It's so much nicer than thinking.

[Speaker 2] (43:43 - 44:01)

So just to be sure that I fully hear you correctly, it never happens that one of these puffs kind of has a little hook that comes down that catches you by the neck or something like that. And, you know, just a little hook that comes in, like I forgot to do something.

[Speaker 1] (44:03 - 44:27)

Good question. I have experienced in the past, not for some time now, occasionally some thought coming in, and hook is a good word, I experienced in the past sometimes, and I

can't remember when the last time was, occasionally some thought coming in and wanting more of me than just appear and disappear.

[Speaker 3] (44:28 - 44:28)

Yes.

[Speaker 1] (44:28 - 44:32)

It goes, I perceive it, it goes like this, it pulls your sleeve.

[Speaker 3] (44:33 - 44:34)

Yeah, yeah.

[Speaker 1] (44:36 - 44:52)

And so that's, I usually, I notice it and then there's an intensification of presence. There's a conscious, a conscious choice at that moment to be more intensely present.

[Speaker 2] (44:52 - 44:53)

Interesting.

[Speaker 1] (44:53 - 46:15)

Yeah. The same thing happens when a challenge comes in, in everyday life, something goes wrong, whatever it may be, and a challenge comes in, and what otherwise could easily develop into some kind of minor drama. And again, at that time, usually it's not even so much a conscious choice, it almost happens naturally, that immediately there is an intensification of presence.

So that's something that I hadn't mentioned before. There is the normal level of presence is the ticking over of the normal level. When the challenge comes in, there is a, I call it sometimes the dimmer switch, is turned up, and there's more intense presence when the challenge comes, because only more intense presence can burn the, the thoughts that want to arise there.

And so there's then a, and hard to describe what a heightening of presence is, but if I could act it out.

[Speaker 2] (46:16 - 46:16)

Please.

[Speaker 1] (46:18 - 47:53)

It's like normal, normal presence is, and more intense presence is, and back to normal,

more intense, the more intense presence is a, there's, presence becomes a sharp sword, as I sometimes compare to that in intense presence, which if you're surrounded by pandemonium, could happen, then that is required, and so there's the, or if there's a very strong pull by some thought that says, come this way, I will lead you to a wonderful place, it's called drama and unhappiness, just follow me, you will love it, and then you have to go, you can't fight that thing, you can't say, no, go away, you give it more power, you just go, you have to have that fierceness then, the presence becomes fierce presence, whereas before, presence was gentle, gentle presence.

[Speaker 2] (47:55 - 48:19)

And have you noticed in your life, what it is that happens in your life, what kinds of thoughts might require you to turn up the volume on presence, for example, you know, for some people, it might be thoughts about money or thoughts about their intimate partner, I'm just curious, have you seen any pattern for you, which ones are the tuggy thoughts?

[Speaker 1] (48:20 - 48:20)

Well.

[Speaker 2] (48:22 - 48:25)

I know I'm getting personal here, Eckhart, but I can't help myself.

[Speaker 1] (48:28 - 49:01)

The incomprehensible world of personal finance, having to see my accountant tomorrow, for example, and not understanding all the paperwork and so on, can sometimes lead us to an attempt of the mind to get in there and start thinking about it and then, and then I realized, back to presence, it's a, that could be, for example, that kind of thing.

[Speaker 2] (49:01 - 49:17)

And of course, you teach so many different approaches to turning up presence. What is it that you do? When you turn up presence?

Do you have a standard approach? Do you intensify the feeling of the inner body? Or what do you do?

[Speaker 1] (49:17 - 49:46)

I, it's just, it just happens. I do it, I could say sometimes I do it or sometimes it just happens, but I cannot say how this because there is no how. I could say if it's, if you, if it doesn't, if you don't know, if you don't do it, I could recommend that you, to somebody, to be more intensely present in their inner body.

[Speaker 2] (49:46 - 49:47)

But in your experience?

[Speaker 1] (49:47 - 51:32)

But in my case, I'm not, I'm not saying, okay, I need to be more intensely present in my inner body. There is no, it just happens without any intermediate step. It just happens.

I can, I can even do it here. I can be present in the normal, gentle way, or as I just demonstrated, or I can be present more intensely, which is the sharp sword, and it's, it requires no step really. It just happens immediately.

Let's see. It's, they're both quite pleasant. They're very pleasant, the normal presence and the intense presence.

And then you could have, again, let's say I am participating in a conversation or whatever, then there is the presence is in the background. So I may be talking or contributing to the conversation. And then the presence is there as a sense of still aliveness in the background, which I sometimes call space, inner space, to sense the inner space.

That's vital because otherwise you get, your mind takes over. So, but that doesn't, it does not happen anymore, fortunately. So degrees of, degrees of presence.

[Speaker 2] (51:35 - 52:30)

One of the things that I've discovered about you, you're now working on Eckhart Tolle TV with you and getting to know you better over the last couple years, is how sharp and precise your mind is. I didn't know this, I think in the beginning, because so much of your teaching was about exploring the space in between thoughts, that I didn't realize Eckhart is actually quite sharp and sophisticated. For example, when you tell a story or you teach on a book, you're very exact.

You have the details right, or you don't state them. And I'm curious if you've found any relationship between the space in your mind and the exactitude and precision of your mind and what that relationship might be.

[Speaker 1] (52:30 - 55:07)

Hmm. Well, with the space, the sense of space, thought actually works better, works more precisely, more simply, and more, has more power to it than let's compare perhaps to an engine, a car engine. A car engine that is but the owner, let's say, misuses the engine by sitting in the car a lot of the time.

The car is in neutral and he or she is just putting the foot on the gas just to hear the

sound of the engine and it goes for hours. He sits in the stationary car going, not going anywhere at all, just to get so used to it. And then when he finally needs to go somewhere, the engine isn't that efficient anymore because it's worn out.

So the same applies to the mind. If there's continuous misuse of the mind, and you can't even call it use because the mind has taken over, and there is every hour of the day, there's continuous stream of thinking, a lot of it useless, repetitive, and even negative. And if then this person who is usually immersed in the stream of repetitive, continuous thinking, mental noise, has to actually apply their mind in order to analyze something, or relate something, or find a solution to a problem, to certain situations require thought, then their mind isn't actually that effective anymore.

Just like the engine that has been misused, it loses its sharpness and its power. So I'm using that analogy, and I believe it is true. My mind, I believe, works better now than it did when I was at university.

Usually people say, well, you lose your mental powers as you grow older, but I don't find that. I think my mental powers in my 20s were less than they are now. And I can also think more creatively now than I could then.

[Speaker 2] (55:09 - 56:07)

Okay, Eckhart, I think I have a pretty good sense of the, or a sense of the inner landscape of your mind. And now I'd like to see if we could talk some about emotions. Some teachers who emphasize disidentification, still value and want to welcome and feel the full range of emotional experience.

You could say a sort of tantric approach, if you will, you know, bring on the rage, bring on the desire, bring on the sadness, even. There's no identification, but these are different kinds of clouds that move through space. And I'm wondering if it's like that for you, or if it's not like that for you in terms of the range of emotions and the depth of emotional experience.

[Speaker 1] (56:07 - 56:09)

It's not like that.

[Speaker 2] (56:09 - 56:10)

I had a feeling.

[Speaker 1] (56:14 - 1:04:39)

There's a relatively little, and what there is, is very short lived. It can come as a, let's say, anger on very rare occasions, as a flash that goes through and then passes out again, is not, thought doesn't get hold of it and starts amplifying it and prolonging it. So

it doesn't, any emotion that arises, sadness, perhaps seeing some human suffering or other suffering, any life form, suddenly sadness arising.

I can cry. Occasionally I cry when I see a movie, it can happen. And so the emotion is there.

I can also, I also cry when I see occasionally something, a human being in suffering. And so the emotion comes and then it passes again. It lasts maybe a minute or two minutes or less.

And it's rare. So there are, doesn't happen that often, any kind of emotion really. This doesn't mean I'm dead inside.

If there were no presence and I didn't have any emotion, then I would be dead inside. So if you, if you have no presence and no emotions, that means you're not truly alive inside. But if you, if there is presence in you, if there's awareness, then that is the primary source of aliveness.

And compared to that emotion is only a turbulence within that primary aliveness. So if you have nothing, if you don't have access to the primary aliveness, then you need the turbulence to give you some sense of aliveness. And that's why people need, many people need their drama, their daily drama or weekly drama or the drama in relationships truly.

We are still, we are still alive. It's still without the drama. It's everything seems to die down.

So people love their drama. They create it in their daily life unconsciously, because at least it gives them some sense of aliveness. As I get excited about my problems and talk about it, at least I know I'm alive, but I, this doesn't, I don't have that.

You don't actually need all those things when there's presence. So within the field of presence, occasional small turbulences happen. They're rare.

That's how I experience it. I don't want to pronounce judgment upon people who instill, say they are present, but they love indulging in all kinds of emotions. I haven't been inside them, so I can't really tell what their state is like, whether it's just a justification for loss of awareness or whether there is something that is actually, they just love the emotion, despite the fact that they are aware.

I would have to enter into these people to know how they experience that. So I'd better not to pronounce any judgment on them. So many days pass without any particular emotion arising at all.

So it's much more common not to have any emotion. By the way, to feel empathy with

another human being, to feel love or loving kindness for another human being, I don't regard that as an emotion. That emotion is the neediness of attachment to another human being.

But the outflow of loving kindness or love towards another human being is not a turbulence. It's a deep thing that comes out of the recognition that the consciousness that I am is the essence of who you are also. So what I love in you is consciousness loves itself.

What I love in my dog, when I look at the dog, although the fur is nice and soft and it's lovely to touch the dog, but when I look into the eyes of the dog, there's something that I love in the dog that is more than the fur or the tissues or the blood and bones that is there. If you look under the skin and under the fur, there's just really a bag of organs and blood and bones and tissue. That's not the same with a human being.

That's not what you love. So what I love in the dog is the consciousness of the dog, because I can see there is a consciousness looking. Within the limitations of the dog form, there is the consciousness coming, looking, and I see myself in a somewhat very different form.

And the same when you look at another human being, and there is the connection, the inner connection, that's not, to me, this is not an emotion at all. It is much deeper than that. And so that is there a lot of the time.

I actually, I love so many things, not just when I connect with humans. I haven't spoken about that yet. It just came to me because it's so natural.

I don't usually, I don't think about that. I love inanimate objects. I often, I pick something up and hold it for a few seconds because I love its presence.

It could be the toothpaste tube. It could be a book. And I love it, not because what's written in it, but its simple physical presence.

Anything, anything, it could be anything. The table, the surface of the table. It's, so there's, the world is, that is an aspect, I would say, of this, the sense of aliveness of the world that you inhabit, and of not reducing everything around you to a means to an end.

It's for, I'm using this for this or that purpose, and it needs to get me there, but to appreciate it for what it is, not for what it can do for you, but simply for what it is. So that's the lovingness towards things, the appreciation of things. But all that is not emotional.

There's no emotion there. And again, the true love between humans is emotion between two humans can be part of what is the deeper foundation for the connection between two humans is awareness, presence. That's the consciousness that connects you.

In addition to having that as a foundation, there can be emotions floating around the surface too, but they are not the focal point, they are not the main thing of what connects you. So I don't want to create the impression in anybody that they should get rid of their emotions, because that's not how it works.

[Speaker 2] (1:04:39 - 1:05:06)

No, but you don't seem to be a very big fan of emotions, I would say, from hearing how it works inside of you, meaning something like sadness. Some people, some maybe melancholy, loving people might see sadness as something quite beautiful and interesting and worth really spending some time in. But it sounds like for you, it's more like a cloud formation that's passing.

[Speaker 1] (1:05:06 - 1:05:40)

Yes, yes. I also, I don't, I don't feel drawn to music that's emotional. So, and so it's not, I'm not afraid of emotion.

It's like being in a, it's the, a place that is much deeper than than any emotion, and more permanent aliveness, not a temporary high or temporary low, which is what emotions are.

[Speaker 2] (1:05:41 - 1:06:07)

Yeah, I mean, it sounds like what you're saying is without being explicitly judgmental. It sounds like what you're saying, though, is that your sense is that people who indulge, quote unquote, take their emotions for a ride. It's really a way that they can feel alive, because their inner presence and sense of aliveness isn't active and awake enough.

So they this is the way they can feel.

[Speaker 1] (1:06:07 - 1:06:26)

That's right. Yes, yes. And as far as they are concerned, I mean, they're right, because then at least they're in connected to that substitute, as I call it, some substitute sense of aliveness, but at least there's some aliveness there then.

So rather than being dead, have some drama. Yes.

[Speaker 2] (1:06:26 - 1:07:38)

Yeah. Okay. Now I have a slightly different question here, Eckhart, which is some people who have experienced some degree of wakefulness still seem to manifest quite a difficult time in certain areas of their life.

Maybe it's in their business life, or it's in their relationship life, or it's with their physical

health. And the spiritual openness that they've touched doesn't seem to translate into these other aspects of their life. And what I'm getting at here is I'm curious if you think that spiritual awakening in and of itself, quote unquote, solves all of our problems, or if at the same time, it's quite important for people to do their psychological work, focus on their physical health, concern themselves with nutrition, or do these things just naturally happen?

They naturally happen, you don't have to worry about?

[Speaker 1] (1:07:38 - 1:15:22)

Well, spiritual awakening does not immediately solve all your problems. Nor does it mean that your life from then on, will be free of challenges. So the challenges continue.

Not that you would be likely to find yourself continuously in dysfunctional situations. That's very unlikely when you are spiritually awake, or even relatively conscious, if not even fully awake. It's unlikely that you would find yourself for long periods of time, or most of the time in dysfunctional or unpleasant drama situations, and so on.

However, challenges remain. Life will continue to give you challenges. That's part of being here as a physical form.

So there will be no end to the whatever challenges of whatever kind will come from time to time. And so it's not that spiritual awakening removes all those things, all those challenges. But it does improve your life immeasurably, even on the outer level to a large extent, but challenges will still come.

And whatever new situation you go into, there will be some new challenge that arises there. And that spiritual awakening doesn't mean that does not happen. What happens to spiritually awakened is, even as they are confronted with a challenge, the challenge is seen within the context of a deeper transcendent dimension.

There is a spaciousness in which the challenge is not seen as something, some gigantic thing that completely occupies your attention. It is here within the spaciousness of presence, and there's the challenge. You primarily dwell in the presence.

You don't dwell in the problem. That's why the challenge doesn't become a problem. It remains a challenge.

So you remain rooted in the transcendent dimension. And from there, you do what you can, if there's anything you can do to deal with the challenge. Also, what doesn't happen is you will never encounter situations in life that are totally satisfying.

You will never encounter physical locations that are totally satisfying. You don't encounter living situations that are totally satisfying, even relationships that are totally

satisfying, or activities that are totally satisfying all the time. You never encounter that.

No matter where you go and what you do, you will always find an element of unsatisfactoriness that's part of living in the world of form, but every form is limited. And so to believe that with spiritual realization, the element of unsatisfactoriness will disappear from your external life experience, is not the case. It remains.

But that is no longer a problem because it is all seen from the larger context of what I sometimes call the transcendent dimension. In other words, your happiness or your sense of satisfaction is never derived from the conditions of your life. This is where people, of course, look for happiness and satisfaction before they awaken.

When they are unawakened, they look for the satisfactions in the conditions of their life. For a little while, they find it here, and then for another little while they find it in some other condition, but always they find the condition does not ultimately provide happiness and satisfaction. And that eventually, that very fact, eventually produces more and more suffering, and the suffering eventually produces the awakening.

So it's all fine. But the fact is, conditions cannot give you happiness or satisfaction because there's always something that's not quite right. And so the difference between an awakened and an unawakened, or an unconscious human being, and even a somewhat conscious human being, is that the unconscious human continuously is looking for the right conditions as some kind of prerequisite for happiness.

The awakened human does no longer look for the perfect conditions in my life because his or her happiness or satisfaction or aliveness or joy or peace, whatever you want to call it, he doesn't, he or she does not need to derive it anymore from the conditions of their life. It comes from the unconditioned consciousness, the alive presence that you sense that you are, consciousness itself. This is the ultimate satisfaction, and this is the transcendent dimension of life, formless.

It has nothing to do with the conditions of your life. So, and then you can have a spacious relationship with the conditions of your life without clinging to conditions or becoming repelled by conditions. You can have a spacious relationship with the conditions and allow them to be the way they are at this moment, as they are, in all their loveliness for a while and in all their defectiveness with something is missing, something goes wrong within it.

So life becomes, for the first time, satisfying because you're not dependent on the conditions of your life for your satisfaction or happiness. And that's the great liberation. So it's a misperception in people to believe that once I awaken spiritually, everything is going to be just absolutely great.

Everything around me is going to be absolutely great. No, it's not in the nature of the

world of form to be like that. It's a continuous flux.

It's a continuous change. So it's not going to remain. If it's absolutely great today, it won't be tomorrow or next year.

So, and you don't need it. You don't need that. What you need is to be in touch with that which transcends all conditions.

This, I'm only putting what the Buddha already talked about very clearly also in his teachings.

[Speaker 2] (1:15:23 - 1:15:53)

So in your own life, have you not experienced after your awakening, the need for something like seeing a therapist for psychological trouble about something or other or seeing a physical coach to help you with this or that or saying, you know, I still need these other inputs to work out things on the relative level that are still problematic? Or is it not like that?

[Speaker 1] (1:15:53 - 1:17:13)

No, I've never, never occurred to me that I needed to seek help for something on a psychological level. I could have sought help for my body is not, I mean, it's seems perfectly fine. It's not a perfect body.

It's a bit crooked here and there. And it's not, but I'm okay with that. And it doesn't cause me much trouble at all.

So far, eventually probably will because things decay eventually. So many people tell me you should see a physical therapist, and maybe it would be helpful. But somehow for some reason, I, I, I don't like my energy field to be invaded by someone no matter how conscious that physical therapist may be and how wonderful work he or she does, somehow have a reluctance to get fee my energy field invaded by that.

But that's not necessarily saying that there's great wisdom in that that's just a characteristic that's there in me.

[Speaker 2] (1:17:14 - 1:18:17)

Okay, I've got I just have one final question. In talking about your awakening minus experience, there can be a sense that there's a gap between we people in the process of awakening, and Eckhart Tolle's dramatic experience. And yet I asked you to do this, I wanted to hear about this, sort of like seeing a vision of something that's possible and the value in that.

But how individual do you think awakening might be? Perhaps it will look very, very

different. For someone who's listening, watching, going through the process of awakening, what do you think about that?

How much has to be there? This is what it's like, no matter who you are, what time or place and how much is quite individual?

[Speaker 1] (1:18:20 - 1:22:52)

Probably the, the awakening, what happens in the awakening must be the same in every human being, but the way in which that human being then interprets what happened or the way in which he or she talks about it, or thinks about it, or even how he or she interprets it could be very enormously. If, for example, awakening could happen to somebody who is still, who is very much within the within the cultural context of a particular form of spirituality. So if an awakening happens to somebody who lives in an ashram in India, it might be interpreted very differently, or somebody who is a Christian.

And again, that's why you can see some people talk about the birth of, the birth of Christ in me, and I suddenly, they say, I got this incredible sense of Christ entering me. This could be one way of interpreting the, the awakening process. And they are not entirely wrong, because if Christ means anything, Christ is the transcendent human, Jesus becomes the Christ.

The Christ has no past to it, the Christ is the transcendental reality. And even St. Paul in the New Testament said something like, I must, I must diminish and Christ in me must grow. So it looks then as if, if I talk about it, and somebody like that talks about it, they talk about something totally different, but fundamentally they are not.

It's only when it reaches, when that which is, which takes place in the formless is then seen from the dimension of form, it may look very different from person to person. But the fundamental disidentification from mental forms, that is the same, because it's only then that the Christ consciousness, or Buddha nature, whatever you want to call it, then suddenly is born in you. Another way of putting it, and that's beautiful.

So that's one part of the answer. The second part is then what that person does with the awakened state, how the awakened state works in that particular human being. And when that human being then interacts in the world with others in situations, that also varies enormously.

So not everybody who awakens becomes, writes a book and becomes a formal spiritual teacher. It could be very different. It could be that some creativity comes through you.

It could be that you work with a group of people, innumerable possibilities. And again, that varies from person to person. And also, a few personal characteristics also may remain, then they're not part of, you don't have the ego anymore.

So you're not identified with them. But certain traits that you had before you awakened may still be there after you awaken. It even happened that in India, one famous spiritual teacher, he was a chain smoker before he awakened, and he was still a chain smoker after he awakened.

So he died, of course, because he smoked too much. Not that he minded very much. So yes, so there are variations on the surface.

But the core is the same. I'm sure that what happens deep down in you is the same in anybody in the awakening process.

[Speaker 2] (1:22:54 - 1:23:09)

And if our conversation has initiated a greater longing in people for a deeper level of awakening, what would you say to our viewers in response to that?

[Speaker 1] (1:23:10 - 1:24:50)

Well, the longing for awakening is already part of the awakening. So if there's a longing for awakening, then the door is already there. The door is already a little bit open.

Because otherwise you would belong to those millions who not only have no longing, but actually would intensely dislike even the concept of awakening, or have never even heard of it. It doesn't even enter their consciousness. So if there's a longing for awakening, then you're already touching it.

And it's already beginning to happen because the longing is there because you're recognizing that something in what we are saying here is true. There's an immediate saying, yes. On some level, you can sense that there is a truth in here about the human condition and about you.

And that in you which can sense that, is that part that is already awake. And that needs to grow in you. But don't believe the mind might be telling you that you are not there at all yet.

And yet you are listening to this and you are going, yes. Wow. That means part of you is already awakening.

So don't believe your mind when the mind doesn't know that because it cannot recognize, the thinking mind cannot recognize awakening. It says, I need to awaken. It's happening already.

So if you recognize that, then that will be a great help.

[Speaker 2] (1:24:51 - 1:24:58)

Wonderful. Thank you Eckhart. Thanks for giving us a window into your inner world.

Thank you.

[Speaker 1] (1:24:58 - 1:24:59)

Thank you.